

SPREAD THE WORD...

THERE'S A NEW PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WORKING ON CLIMATE CHANGE!

What Problem Does CivicSpark Address?

Local governments throughout California are climate change leaders. However, several significant challenges impede their progress, including: budget constraints, the loss of key tools and funding sources, and limited technical familiarity with emerging tools and practices. To help local governments overcome these obstacles, the Local Government Commission (LGC), in partnership with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, is launching a new program, CivicSpark.

What Federal and State Agencies Make CivicSpark Possible?

CivicSpark is an AmeriCorps program administered by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the state California Commission – California Volunteers. CNCS engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its core programs - Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund - and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. California Volunteers is the state office that manages programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of Californians engaged in service and volunteering. In the AmeriCorps program alone, 800,000 members have contributed more than 1 billion hours in service across America.

Who Funds CivicSpark?

CivicSpark is funded both by the federal and state government and by local governments. CNCS, the federal agency mentioned above, awarded California Volunteers, the state agency also mentioned above, a block grant of \$638,267 for the service year 2014-2015, to hire 48 CivicSpark team members. These entities end up paying roughly \$18/project hour or 'matching' what each local government participant will pay.

Local governments who apply and end up receiving these CivicSpark team members will contribute \$18/project hour delivered (i.e. local government participants will not pay for training or administrative time). This fiscal contribution does not pay for a specific CivicSpark team member; it helps run the entire program. This contributory rate is all inclusive and covers: workers compensation, liability insurance, workplace costs, member personnel benefits, and job travel support. Local governments will pay a 10% deposit and quarterly installments.

Note a few important points. First, local governments can obtain third party funding to pay for their match (but there are caveats if the third party funder is the federal government). Second, in the Southern California region where the Regional Energy Network (REN) will be administering CivicSpark, it may be able to advance participating local governments' deposits and first installments and seek reimbursement at a later time.

Who Implements CivicSpark?

- CivicSpark Co-Partners:
 - The Governor's Office of Research and Planning
 - The Local Government Commission (LGC)
- 9 Regional Administrators throughout California
 - In Southern California, the REN is the Regional Administrator

How Does CivicSpark Actually Work?

The LGC and Regional Administrators will solicit applications from local governments which detail their climate-related project ideas and an estimate of hours necessary to complete CivicSpark projects, or number of CivicSpark team members desired.

(Please see www.civicsparkca.org for local government eligibility requirements). LGC and Regional Administrators will also solicit applications from college graduates with relevant experience in sustainability to become CivicSpark team members. LGC will solicit applications from retired management professionals to become ½ time CivicSpark team member Supervisors. Once local government participants are selected and CivicSpark team members and their Supervisors are hired, then the work starts!

Depending upon local governments' needs, there are two possible work models:

➤ Model 1

LGC and the Regional Administrator will assemble Climate Readiness Teams, which will be comprised of 6 CivicSpark team members and their part-time Supervisor. These teams will be disseminated throughout the region. These teams will complete roughly 6-12 research, planning, and project implementation activities annually. These teams will work offsite from the participating local government.

➤ Model 2

LGC and the Regional Administrator will assign individual CivicSpark team members to specific local governments to work directly with them onsite on selected projects. The part-time Supervisor will still oversee each CivicSpark team member, potentially through weekly in-person meetings and email.

What Kinds of Projects Could CivicSpark Team Members Complete?

CivicSpark team members will work on a range of daily tasks, including: data collection and analysis, meeting facilitation, community outreach, report writing, and presentation of results. They will work on multiple projects during the service year related to climate change such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, or public health. Sample projects could include:

- Energy Efficiency – benchmarking local building energy use, creating an outreach plan for lowering local business energy use, identifying solar ready sites, or engaging local governments in a bulk solar purchasing program.
- Climate change – researching anticipated local health impacts on climate change, localizing a Community Climate Action Plan template, or tracking metrics to monitor and evaluate progress.
- Sustainable Communities – creating a safe routes to school improvement plan, coordinating implementation of common sustainable community strategies in a region, or analyzing ZEV infrastructure needs

When Will CivicSpark Start?

The 2014-2015 service year will start in mid-September when CivicSpark team members train intensively for two weeks and formally begin in early October when they start their substantive work.

Why will CivicSpark be Valuable to Local Governments?

With a strongly defined program structure that includes oversight by the LGC, direct supervision by CivicSpark Regional Supervisors, and clearly documented performance expectations, this program is designed to deliver results. Notably, in a previous case study, the PG&E funded Small Cities Climate Action Partnership) utilized a similar AmeriCorps based team to implement technical services for local governments. The “value” of this service was estimated to be upwards of \$100/hr.

For More Information:

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<http://www.civicsparkca.org/>